



Sept. 15, 2014

## **Travis County Medical Examiner and Austin-Travis County EMS team up for National Child Passenger Safety Week**

In Travis County in 2013, motor vehicle crashes accounted for nearly 20 percent of deaths of children, age 15 and younger. This week (September 14-20) is National Child Passenger Safety Week, and the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office and Austin-Travis County EMS are reminding parents and caregivers of the life-saving importance of using properly installed child safety seats.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and significant injury for children 1 to 14 years of age in the United States, but the proper use of child safety seats can significantly reduce the risk. The reduction in risk of death for infants (less than 1 year-old) is 71 percent; and for toddlers (ages 1-4) and young children in booster seats (ages 4-8), the reduction rate is 54 percent.

The vast majority of child safety seats are not correctly installed in vehicles. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates three of four parents do not properly use child safety seats. The safest place for a child in a vehicle is in a rear seat, properly buckled in a child safety seat or booster seat. Parents and caregivers should know the stages for installing seats:

- Birth to 2 – rear-facing car seat,
- Age 2-5 – forward-facing car seat,
- Age 5 until seat belt fits properly – booster seat. (Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lies across the hips and thighs, not stomach, and the shoulder belt lies across the chest, not over the neck.)

This week, Austin-Travis County EMS is checking the installation of child safety seats at several events. They will also have free child safety seats for families in need or who are currently using inappropriate child safety seats for their children. For information, or to make an inspection appointment, call their Child Passenger Safety line at 512-972-SAFE (7233), or email them at: [EMSPubEd@austintexas.gov](mailto:EMSPubEd@austintexas.gov). Additional safety seat inspection dates and locations are listed at: <http://dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders/checkups.shtm>.

Texas law mandates the use of child safety seats. Section 545.412 of the Texas Transportation Code states that a child who is younger than 8 years of age and less than 4-feet-9-inches in height must be secured in a child passenger safety seat restraint system according to the instructions of the manufacturer. Not using child safety seats is a misdemeanor crime, punishable by a fine of \$25 to \$250.

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